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ABSTRACT

This document is one of a series by the Youth Development Center at the University of Minnesota dedicated to the discussion of youth. Thirteen participants from various social science fields were asked to present a perspective on youth from the viewpoints of their profession or discipline. This dialogue, an edited and restructured version of the discussions, provides an overview of the whole subject of youth. Out of the discussion came six general ideas which may be of help to people working with youth. These ideas include the need for adults to acknowledge youth's cry for personal, individual recognition and their general need for affection, self-respect, and a sense of personal worth. In addition, adults need to present to youth educational alternatives that do not prolong dependence and separate youth from other age groups, and ways in which youth can participate in the democratic decision making process in schools and society. Adults must provide youth with models of committed, reliable, and honest relationships between people. Finally, adults must stress the idea that the search for identity is a continuing process through adulthood and does not require the attainment of a singular viewpoint but requires continual questioning and evaluation. (Author/DE)

Seminar Series No. 1 • August 1970

CENTER FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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EDUCATION

Dialogue on YOUTH

Viewed from several disciplines and professions

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dialogue on YOUTH

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY VIEW

Center for Youth Development and Research
University of Minnesota
Seminar Series No. 1 August 1970

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INTRODUCTION

In 1968, the University of Minnesota established the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to help make the University more responsive to the needs of the larger community. As a coordinator of community programs for CURA in the area of youth, I felt that high priority should be given to bringing together a group of faculty and community people for the purpose of beginning an interdisciplinary dialogue on youth. This Youth Seminar has met almost monthly for two years and has had a unique impact both on our understanding and on our subsequent action.

We began by sharing experiences with a variety of youth populations in an unstructured but very informative way. As we talked, it became apparent that there was an incredible, and as yet, unmet need in relation to knowledge about youth - *a need for the systematic translation of research and knowledge into practice.* Responding to this need, the seminar participants drew up a proposal for a Youth Development Center. This Center has since been formally established by the University; its activities extend into many areas.

A new phase of the Youth Seminar was initiated in September 1969, when eight participants from various fields were asked to present a perspective of youth from the viewpoint of their profession or discipline. The conversation which follows in this publication is a composite of nine months of presentations and discussions. Seminar meetings were tape recorded. This dialogue is an edited and restructured version which we hope will provide an overview of the whole subject of "youth".

We are indebted to the following seminar participants:

Mitchell Berdie	Psychology
Ralph Berdie	Counselling Psychology
Shirley Clark	Sociology and Education
Richard Currier	Anthropology
Cecelia Foxley	Educational Psychology
Arthur Johnson	Sociology
Gisela Konopka	Social Work
Carl Malmquist	Psychiatry
Robert Ross	American Studies
Diane Stein	Physical Medicine
Thomas Walz	Social Work
James Wiebler	Social Work
Robert Wirt	Clinical Psychology

We are especially indebted to *Nancy Belbas* who is the editor of this dialogue.

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I hope you will find this discussion as helpful and stimulating as those of us did who took part in it.

Gisela Konopka, Director
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Konopka: One of my dreams has always been to sit down with a group of experienced, thoughtful people such as this, whose areas of interest and vocation concern youth, to try to gain a comprehensive picture of what we call "youth". Although we all work with certain categories of youth -- delinquents, students, inner-city or middle-class young people, or troubled youth -- or with youth-serving personnel, there is seldom a sharing of our collective understanding which would enrich and supplement our separate areas. This has been badly needed, and this is why I think this gathering is so significant. Let me throw out these questions to begin our discussion:

What are the general characteristics, the cross-cultural touchstones of all youth during this period of life?

What in our culture accentuates these characteristics?

Are there biological changes which define a stage which is neither childhood nor adulthood?

What are the biological changes and their relationships to other areas of growth?

Stein: There are some in the medical profession who would argue that adolescence is a physical phenomenon. Some would say that the emotional problems and the emotional growth of this period have their origin in the glandular changes that occur at pubescence and in the physical changes that result from this glandular readjustment.

Johnson: As a sociologist, I would, of course, have to take issue with that kind of viewpoint. My alternative perspective is that pubescence is a physical phenomenon but adolescence is a cultural phenomenon. The important thing about puberty and its physiological manifestation and change is not what they are biologically, but what meaning is attached to them in our culture.

The inner turmoil of youth is such an example. Rather than being intrinsically psychological and natural, this conflict may very well be culturally effected. Where youths were integrated into the culture early as they were in medieval times and in rural societies, there was no such thing as storm and stress.

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Sociologists see the role of youth largely as bestowed, validated, and defined by social process.

Stein: You have raised some very interesting questions about the inter-relationships between physical development and their cultural components. Before delving more deeply into those inter-relationships, let me offer a more complete picture of those developments which are indisputably biological.

For example, when is the biological onset of adolescence? It is much earlier than 12 years, which is generally the youngest age at which patients can be admitted to an adolescent medical service or clinic. Endocrine changes, at first detectable only by excretion of certain products of hormonal degradation in the urine, begin to appear in both sexes at age 8 to 10 and changes consistent with beginning sexual maturity can be clearly defined in most girls by age 10. Puberty is almost considered to be a *mid-point* in adolescence. There are changes beginning at age 8 but certainly not the kinds of emotional conflicts that we usually think of as being part of adolescence. Because of the marked variation in the rapidity with which biological maturity is achieved, chronological age does not mean very much when considering adolescence. It is more useful to think in terms of developmental age. For instance, a lower pulse rate and elevated systolic blood pressure become less pathological when one observes them in a 13-year old girl who is already menstruating than in a younger girl.

Currier: Anthropologists have discovered a curious phenomenon in primitive cultures where teenage girls, who have begun menstruating and who have intercourse several times a week, almost never become pregnant. It would almost seem there were psychogenic factors - that the girls were so convinced they would not conceive that it could not happen.

Stein: Perhaps some psychogenic factors are at work but studies have shown that particularly in tropical areas where nutritional needs were not completely met, ovulation does not begin until as many as three years after menstruation. This is called early adolescent sterility and has been well investigated medically.

There are many biological or medical changes like that one which are distinctly adolescent. For example, one's ability to cope with certain kinds of disorders is very different than in an earlier age period. Suscepti-

bility to upper respiratory infection is much lower than in childhood; epilepsy may be reactivated in the form of seizures because of the growth spurt and endocrine imbalance; diabetes is severe or brittle compared to adulthood and the adolescent may actually experience diabetic insulin comas fairly often; the activity of the adolescent with organic heart disease need not be as closely restricted as in childhood. While the female vaginal cavity is better able to defend itself against venereal disease after puberty, changing social conditions and a medical assumption in the 1950's that venereal disease was on its way out and that we could relax our education and detection of it, has caused the rate to soar among teenage girls.

Konopka: Is there a pattern of growth and development which is fairly general?

Stein: Yes, somatic or body growth occurring at the time of puberty lasts approximately three years and is as striking as sexual development. The so-called adolescent growth spurt usually occurs between the ages of 12 to 16, with a peak at age 14 in boys; and at ages 9 -12, with a maximum at age 11, in girls. Body growth, by and large, usually ends by age 17 in girls and 19 in boys. When does biological sexual maturity occur? A physician, Heald, states that "in a biological sense, adolescence is less a flowering than a slow blooming and requires the lapse of more than a decade."

Foxley: I might insert here the findings of a study published in 1950 which indicate an interesting relationship between physical and psychological development. A group of early-maturing adolescent boys was compared with a group of late-maturers. Generally, the early-maturers appeared to be non-attention seeking; unaffected and matter-of-fact, while the late-maturers were relatively tense, showing greater "childish" activity, and striving for attention. Those who were physically accelerated were usually accepted and treated by adults and other children as more mature. The late-maturers, however, were usually treated as the little boys they appeared to be. It may be that "active small boys" are expressing through activity not merely a survival of an immature behavior pattern, but may also be using this technique to hold the attention of others and to compensate for a physically less-favored status. As might be expected, the early maturers paid greater attention to personal grooming and demonstrated more

interest in the opposite sex than did the late-maturers. I bring this up to draw attention to these inter-relationships and to emphasize that we cannot and do not approach psychological development without the realization of many influencing and interacting factors.

Malmquist: Perhaps you would be interested to know that in psychiatric clinics the boy - girl ratio runs between 5 to 1 and 10 to 1. In fact, at the elementary school age, the ratio is as high as 8 to 10 boys to one girl. As adolescence wanes, the girls start to catch up. In fact, they are catching up gradually in high school; but it is still a boy-girl dominance.

R. Berdie: This raises an interesting question as to whether the way we raise women provides them with more resources or whether the situation essentially is an easier one for women to handle.

Johnson: As a sociologist, I would have to wonder from those statistics whether we over-socialize our girls and under-socialize boys? Where do girls get their sex models?

Stein: Ironically, while three times as many male teenagers succeed in committing suicide each year, females attempt suicide three to ten times as often. About one out of every 1,000 teenagers in America attempts suicide each year. Family disruption, pregnancy and depression were more common factors than true mental disorders.

Malmquist: As a child psychiatrist, I find the concept of mental illness not very useful in most cases. The large number of youths I see through private and family therapy and through the courts is not really severely disturbed. Today, the great majority of those who do have emotional difficulties are not institutionalized for long periods as was once the case. I am always amazed at the individual's ability to cope under stress and the community's gradual rejection of long term institutionalization. Another impression I have is that today's youth are much more prone to put things into action. Maybe this has some relevance to the studies which indicate that in all ages there is much less prevalence of internalized neurotic conflicts, phobias, anxiety attacks, because patients are externalizing more.

Konopka: I think we should look into ar[illegible]cent

suicide in greater depth. Suicide means that you see no way of coping with life. Right or wrong, it is one's perception that one can no longer exist. That can be, in my opinion, an absolutely realistic assessment. But there is, so often, in adolescence a very unrealistic assessment of oneself. When I was growing up, we talked very openly about suicide wishes. This was recognized and accepted as part of youth. I wonder if we have denied this to adolescents today. If they could talk about these thoughts more openly, maybe they would commit suicide less often.

Stein: Even if it is a realistic assessment, it is unbiological. My suspicion is that there is no other species that can so systematically kill itself.

Konopka: Here we get into philosophy of course. I am sure you would agree that the human being is not purely biological. I think this is what our sociologist was saying earlier - that when we speak of "youth", we must also understand how our culture defines and identifies that biological transition called adolescence. Our discussion also touches on values. This, too, is surely a uniquely human quality.

What is youth's role in our culture?

Currier: As an anthropologist, I think that one way to more clearly define some of the cultural components of youth is to look at pre-industrial societies. While I cannot agree that a situation as painfully real as "youth" is an artifact, we can examine how modern, technological society has re-defined this age concept more or less to fit its own life patterns. The most obvious difference to me between ours and pre-industrial societies is that in the mid-20th century Western civilization, children no longer contribute to the productive enterprise of society as a whole. This is not merely abnormal; it is absolutely unique in human history. The only parallel that you can find, historically and ethnographically, is with children of the elite - rulers' children in palaces and courts. All other children, always, as far as anyone can tell, did real work and contributed materially to the welfare and wealth of the society of which they were a part. Some examples are:

From the age of four or five, young girls took care of small children

Three, four and five-year olds began doing agricultural work geared to their age level.

All children helped with domestic chores.

Work and leisure were combined much more naturally

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in primitive societies because efficiency was not given priority. The "I'm working, don't bother me" attitude towards children is uniquely Western. While pre-industrial societies valued youth and gave them their full attention, we seem not to know what to do with our young people.

Konopka: If youth is not an integral, contributing part of our society, can you say that very quality is another of those touchstones for which we are searching; that is, youth has no real on-going roles in our society. So while collectively youth may wield a great deal of influence, the individual young person does not.

R. Berdie: Interestingly, almost all of the qualities of power valued by our society are not usually possessed by youth, such as, wealth, experience, status in the community, education, "being a man".

Ross: And, ironically, the one activity undertaken by nearly all youth – going to school – is not viewed as legitimate work because the all-important *visible* product of achievement is missing.

Wiebler: While we might agree, then, that youth wields a great deal of influence in styles of music, clothing, and art forms, often this power, too, depends on the affluence of the family. So might we say that another legitimate characteristic of youth is that of economic dependence? Does youth as we know it exist because our economic system allows it? Because we do not need our young to be adults so quickly?

How is youth defined by adult society?

Clark: Some sociologists feel so strongly that adolescence is a sociological phenomenon they argue that adolescence as a life cycle style was invented by the social legislation and social conventions which followed the technological innovations of scarcely more than two centuries ago. For example, the diminishing need for juvenile labor was associated with the enactment of protective legislation - child labor laws, compulsory education laws, and the subsequent arisal of interim status. (One might wonder cynically as to who is protecting whom). American society, like other modern industrial societies, is adolescence-inducing.

Stein: But hasn't it been primarily since World War II that we have had such large numbers of people who

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could afford to give their children the luxury of a prolonged adolescence."

Currier: The youth phenomenon and the teen culture that erupted in the 40's was fed by adults, and this was the case in the 50's too. Adults were giving money to children to allow them leisure and creativity. Parents seem to be tremendously ambivalent about whether they think what youth buys with this money - hot rods, guitars, etc. - is good or bad.

Ross: An example of this same kind of ambivalence is the parent who sends his youngster to college to prepare him for "a better life" on the one hand and attempts to perpetuate his own values on the other.

Currier: Yes, in an ambivalent, almost unconscious sort of way, adult Western society has been training children to have a different culture. This is one of the problems when it comes to making the leap between school and the responsibilities of adult life.

Konopka: I think there is an historical precedent one could trace by studying literature and following the classic theme of conflict between father and son which is related to prolonged adolescence. In a still different light, the prolonged adolescence of the Depression certainly was not the product of affluence and it was catastrophical. We can see the other side of the coin in Israel right now. Because of great external pressure, Israelis are able to say to their youth, "You are useful. We need you as fast as we can get you." And there is little restiveness among their young. Here we are saying, "We want you eventually but we will decide when." This presents a problem to the young person's career development, to his understanding of himself and his worth. Being totally dependent in childhood is acceptable, but it is not to the adolescent who wants very much to begin working out his adult roles during a moratorium period. This "moratorium" allows him to "try out" being an adult without the burden of heavy demands, but in a context which is uncontrived and real.

is there a moratorium for the young?

Mitch Berdie: Many have said that we do not have a real moratorium but perhaps there is some evidence that we do. Could it be that because we are allowing more time to the process of finding oneself that protesting, radicalism and drugs are increasingly prevalent?

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R. Berdie: You may be right. Perhaps the loosening up of academic and social requirements is part of an unacknowledged moratorium period.

Malmquist: I see a significant difference in the current way most of the young people I see and talk with are coming to grips with reality. There seems to be a whole trend in our times away from focusing on one's own psyche. It seems very difficult for the student, for example, to sit down and go through the lonely process of isolation (an internalization and absorption of self) that introspection requires.

Konopka: But is this true of all youth? For example, some Black students I know are struggling with the question: "Who am I really?? Some try to find their identity in Afro-American studies, in the historical past.

Malmquist: I am sure we cannot generalize too broadly but there seems to be an ever-present search for the experiential, the terrible groping of these kids to try to experience something meaningful whether in group therapy or sensitivity training or through drugs. I distinguish this kind of activity from really meaningful introspection.

R. Berdie: I would agree that many youths do seem to be changing their language in terms of finding out who they are. There is a much greater emphasis on experience and on involvement in things outside one's self rather than on a more introspective discovery of one's identity. Also, rather than defining a single set role, the search for identity is a more continuing task. It is a process of "becoming" which really never ends.

Walz: Among high school teaching assistants I work with, I find a tremendous fear of pain and suffering. They fear war more because of being killed than killing. While they seek to experience reality, the very fact of their inexperience makes them anxious about life.

Currier: Here, again, we can point up a very crucial difference between modern and pre-industrial societies. Because the latter began integrating its young so early, by the time a youth reached the age where he was to undertake tasks independently, he had already seen and done almost everything expected of him. Because maturity did not mean a radical shift in life styles, most pre-industrial societies had initiation ceremonies that

signaled the social recognition that adolescents were mature enough to do important work for their society; i.e., raise children. Our society lacks life crisis rites and lacks a definite, clear point at which a child moves from the status of a child to that of an adult. High school graduation or religious confirmations are the closest we come to initiation ceremonies and yet we do not pay all that much attention to them. When you look for maturity in youth, you usually use other criteria first. I think the reason for this, in our case, is that people's lives change so radically upon the assumption of adult status that we do not need a ceremony to punctuate the change.

How do we recognize maturity?

Johnson: There is, indeed, a lot of confusion about the threshold to maturity from adolescence. Just look at the disagreement about voting age rights, legal responsibility, about whether or not the university should act *in loco parentis*.

Ross: From my experience, parents seem to accept independence and "worldliness" much more readily from the non-student than from the student. Even though 68 per cent of all college students are self-supporting, parents still feel deeply concerned about their student-child's housing, dress, language and behavior. They are often far less rigid about life styles of their children when they are working or in the military.

Currier: Our ideas of sexual maturity are also tied up with this notion that maturity is manifested in a radical change. Children in primitive cultures take on rather sophisticated sexual roles in natural play situations at ages we would consider part of the latency period. Because of this early sexual experience, adolescence is not normally a time when sexuality and sexual problems are foremost in the young person's mind.

Johnson: This is in marked contrast to the preoccupation with sex that we see among our young people. Ira Riess talks about a "new puritanism", a preoccupation with the capacity to love as well as to be loved; the compulsive pressure to test one's virility to avoid being labeled homosexual.

Konopka: It is important to remember that in *every* society, the one social fact that is usually identified as the essential mark of maturity is that of having children. That has been synonymous with adulthood. Now we

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have something new. Because of the population explosion, some couples think the responsible decision is not to have children.

And this is related to another change which we see here on campus and elsewhere. For women, there is a shift away from late-adolescence being primarily important for courting and dating to its significance in preparing women for a career, for involving them in the social causes of today.

Clark: Contrarily, the number of women studying for Ph.D's is lower than it was ten years ago.

Stein: And the percentage of women in medical school is also lower.

Foxley: As a student counsellor, I do see a rise in the college girl's interest in social concerns and preparation for vocation, but I still see very great importance placed on having the marriage choice.

What constitutes independence?

Currier: You know that marriage age in pre-industrial cultures varied according to how economically, psychologically, and socially independent the nuclear family was. In most tribal societies the husband and wife do not form an independent economic unit but rather are incorporated into a larger kinship group. In India, where young couples live with their parents, they tend to marry younger. In contrast, the Irish male is married in his late 30's, often to a much younger girl because he is obliged to assume the family farm, support his retired parents, and quite autonomously raise his children and crops. The marriage age for young people today in the United States is slightly higher as youth put more value on independence from their families.

Stein: What are the ways young people are fulfilling their need for adult experience and asserting their independence other than by marrying and raising children?

Currier: The most obvious place is the hippie movement where some social integration of the young is going on. This is an insistence on the part of some who have reached adolescence that they be allowed to participate in social behavior like adults. I believe that there is a biologically-based drive to begin imitation of adult activities in early childhood and to move into the actual performance of those activities after puberty. These

youths want to do something real, to be part of the real world.

R. Berdie: But the hippie movement is only one of a great variety of ways young people are trying to feel part of life. There is also a group of youth, for example, working as clerks in bookstores; who are developing a pattern of life that satisfies the needs you describe in other ways. We must not think of solutions in terms of a single life pattern. There may be hundreds of ways of working through this problem.

Konopka: But we cannot move into solutions before having looked at what is really unique and new. The hippie movement is really a return to the romantic idea that you can still live as you would have in pre-industrial societies.

People have the right to do that, but this is not the solution for industrial society as a whole. I think we are fortunate, however, that we are living at a time when there is not so great a penalty for "deviancy". There was a much stronger feeling ten years ago that people have to be all the same.

Johnson: It was almost ten years ago that David Matza wrote about "Subterranean Traditions of Youth," and classified three kinds of "deviant" youth cultures: the delinquent, bohemian, and radical. I would say there is a real question about the label "deviant" in regard to these prototypes now.

R. Berdie: I think this acceptance of a variety of life styles may be another reason why the usual "storm and stress" of adolescence, as it is classically characterized, is not on the upswing for all youth.

Foxley: Psychologists say that the adolescents most likely to experience heightened emotionality of a severe and prolonged nature are those who deviate markedly from the norm for sexual maturing for their age group. This is not due to the maturing itself, but to the many personal and social problems deviant sexual maturing brings.

Stein: Although I obviously see students who have medical or emotional difficulties, my observation is that there is no lessening of tensions. The very well-adjusted adolescent is a rarity.

Konopka: Erik Erikson and others have talked about the self-imposed adolescent task of developing a personal identity, of striving for an over-all individual personality, including behavior, interests, attitudes, hobbies, career possibilities, etc. Of course this search for identity goes on throughout our adult lives, too. But it seems to have its beginning in adolescence and is certainly part of the turmoil, the storm and stress.

Now I am not so sure that finding *an* identity is still a valid term, as we said earlier. Perhaps we should say that what is evolving is a process of "Becoming", a kind of continuing development where one self-realization builds on another. The ideal now seems to be flexibility. Again, these may be touchstone characteristics of youth: their desire to find out who they are and, in the process their ability to adapt. Sometimes, to be sure, the flexibility of the young distresses their parents who hope for some sign their child has "settled down", found a good job on which he can build a future, or *a* major field in college.

How does the young person define his identity?

Ross: Again, from my perspective of working with youth on campus, I see that it is especially hard for parents of students to accept their youngster's continual change of majors or the view that college need not always be an education for a vocation. Many parents of college-age youth today feel they are giving their children the opportunity for professional training they missed. Parents identify with/or project their own needs and dreams very deeply into this opportunity for their children and become very bitter when their children reject the parent's values of security.

Johnson: Childhood and adolescence has always been a period of socialization and adaptation, when the moral fiber of the family and, indeed, the entire culture is internalized. In a society which is changing as rapidly as ours, a certain disfunctionality is built into the system. The parent, whose values are more rigid and crystallized, has an almost impossible task when it comes to transmitting values in this changing social environment. Consequently, the forces outside the family, which are more creative and more change-oriented, undercut the authority role of the family. Today I think the family has become a very weak source of role models. Parents are told they are not competent to guide or counsel, to educate, to teach sex education or to give vocational advice. We are challenging their authority in the socialization process.

What is the influence of the parent?

To look at this dilemma from the other side, we could say that adolescence hits parents at a time when they are probably feeling less confident and more compromised by life. The middle-aged parent, whose idealism about life and his contribution to it has been dissipated, cannot strongly reinforce the self concept of a somewhat insecure young person whom he may subtly envy. Someone has very aptly described this as the clash of inferiority complexes.

Malmquist: I sometime wonder if the disillusionment and anger of youth about education is not related to a broader kind of disillusionment his parents are realizing. I caution you that my sample is very biased; but I rarely see an adolescent who is hung up and angry about the educational system who does not also have a disillusioned parent, often college-graduate parents. A parent does not often openly criticize his education. Rather, his dissatisfaction takes the form of a middle-aged disappointment with what has happened to his own aspirations and how far his own idealism failed to get him. Seeing his children in the system somehow re-kindles all of his own disappointments and reminds him that he did very little about his own idealism. He took what life had to offer, and his own children are not going to do that. Kids are telling us about our own disappointments and that we have not come through for them. Now there are different ways of looking at this. One could say that young people are all wrong and they better shape up and come around to what the real value systems of society are. The other way is to believe that they are really telling us something, pointing a finger at us which hurts. I came from a silent generation. We sat through the same bad classes and we experienced many of the same disappointments as they do and did very little about it. I can admit to envying the young myself on both a personal and clinical level.

Johnson: Add to this inner conflict the drying up of visible work roles, i.e., the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations which the youngster was once able to see and with which he could identify, the lessening of the authority of the church, the diminishing capacity of teachers to serve as role models, and the immediacy of television as an influence, and you have a situation where the young person is forced to test his personality and social know-how on his own social world. Increasingly the adolescent must obtain the image of what he is as a social being through his peers.

What is the influence of the peer group?

Clark: I am sure the peer group plays a key part in identity formation. Looking at its part from the viewpoint of education and sociology, the sociologist, James Coleman, has made some pertinent observations. He says that an industrialized society, characterized by equality of opportunity and a belief in a better life, recognizes that parents cannot provide the training necessary for placing their children in specialized jobs which are bound to be different from their own. Therefore, the task of educating the child is given to an institution outside of the family and, to a pronounced degree, independent from it. The somewhat unanticipated consequence of moving the job of educating youth out of the family and lengthening the training period has been the creation of an age-segregated society of peers. Not only has job training been taken out of the parents' hands, but so has the whole adolescent. He is dumped into a society of his peers in the sense that he does not have time outside school for the same kind of age-integrated contacts that we presume he previously had. We are also presuming that such a varied range of relationships makes for a smooth transition into adulthood.

Konopka: That seems to be a very negative view of the peer group. I consider the group the atomic power of mankind. I find it exciting that the peer becomes a significant part of the young person's identity search because it is the adolescent's way of moving into his own age group. This is *his* society. It is not dumping him; it is his own development.

Wirt: But when youth is so segregated that it seems almost artificially set apart from the other age groups, I think we find some of the basic, general characteristics of youth exaggerated and the transition into adulthood more traumatic, less natural.

Konopka: As usual, I am eclectic. I would agree with most of what you said, but I do think the need of young people to be with their peers is very general. It is a basic psychological need. Think of the way a two year-old lights up when he sees another little one. It is very different from his reaction to adults. Perhaps the physiological process of maturing makes this affinity even greater during adolescence. The sharing of the inner struggles seems to also bring them closer together.

Although young people have a distinct need to be with each other, I do not think there is A YOUTH

CULTURE, per se. I do not even see sub-cultures of youth. Rather, I view it as an age group with a wide variety of individual and perhaps small group variations.

R. Berdie: Perhaps we can think of youth as a culture in the same way we can talk of a typical family culture. You might say we have a certain kind of family culture in the United States and this consists of a few people living together in a home. When you get down to specific behaviors, it's very difficult to categorize.

Is there a youth culture?

Clark: I think that even if one did regard youth as a subculture, it would certainly not be an isolated social system nor would it be monolithic. There are just too many contingencies. I can think of four: the adolescent's relations to his family, which are still very important to him; the strain on the peer group which is the natural result of individual differences and uniqueness; competitiveness within the group (academic competition is viewed as very divisive within the peer group); lastly, the many ethnic and racial subcultures in America, to say nothing of social, class, religious and residential factors to ever allow one monolithic, universal American youth subculture.

Can the peer group supply models for youth?

Malmquist: Granted it is not a single culture, but there is still the problem of the adolescent having to look to his peers for his models and self-reflections. If models are important—and we all need heroes, and the adolescent needs them more than anyone—who would their hero be? Look at the conflicting alternatives. Would it be the youth who spills blood on and burns draft records or his counterpart who joins the Green Berets and throws grenades in Cambodia? It is the youth who loses his limb in Viet Nam or the youth who goes to prison for refusing to be inducted? Is it someone who spends 15 years in post high school academic training, which he concludes is largely worthless, or someone who becomes a drop-out to "do his own thing".

Moreover, what is the impact on the individual youth of the adult duplicity he is exposed to within his family and which he sees among our political, business and academic leaders? These are the kinds of dilemmas my patients are faced with daily. I cannot help but wonder what the impact of duplicity is on the super ego development of children, particularly adolescents. What seems to ensue within the child is a conflict in terms of certain ethical norms and in terms of what he should do in different predicaments. There is also an increase in

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impulsiveness. Trustworthiness and reliability of models are among the essential coordinates which engender predictability and reason.

Johnson: I see another kind of problem, also. What happens when the peer group becomes almost entirely a social play group? If the peer group is tied so dearly to the process of becoming male or female and if the technique among peers is to have fun and play at love, then this, too, produces some disfuntionalities when these young people reach adulthood.

Walz: Having done an extensive study of youth and their needs in Bloomington, I can offer certain subjective observations on what happens to kids who find the adults, the organizational pattern, the constant barrage of words and rituals very alien to their needs and who fall back on peer support. In a massive high school such as the one in this suburb, the youth have a feeling of powerlessness and are more likely, in such an atmosphere, to become manipulative and game-playing rather than contributors.

Clark: There is a kind of built-in power struggle going on between the values of student society and the continuing and immediate tasks of the teacher. Teachers must try to focus the student's energies into classroom activities, and at the same time, control the classroom so that an orderly environment for learning is provided. Yet, the affective bonds between teacher and student, which are most conducive to learning, are foreign to the workings of a bureaucracy. It may seem negative—but realistic—to say that the success of the school in meeting community expectations hinges on the ability of the staff to creatively contain the conflict.

The kind of distrust that has grown up between the teacher or institution and student is exemplified in the opinion of youth that the student council is a cover for the administration where student leaders are manipulated in order to put across a positive image of a democratic secondary school administration. The extracurricular activities have been the response of staff to the student's needs for expressional outlets. However, the outcome of these activities are usually adult-controlled and dominated, with the exception of athletics. School-sponsored groups have appealed more to girls than to boys who are striving for autonomy.

Walz: There is another subjective impression I get from

this suburban high school, and it centers around the whole question of identity. What happens when you are one of several hundred kids and you never really have any continuous contact with either teachers or administrators? How can you get any feedback as to who you are? Our institutional structure is not able to meet the basic, fundamental need of kids to discover who they are. Nor is there any affectionate responsiveness in these schools. At best, you might be able to find a sympathetic teacher and get 30 seconds a day with him. The only possibility for this kind of relationship comes from peers; and they, too, are hungry for affection. This lack of love, we might call it, produces a profound kind of low-grade depression among these youth. They are in a chronic state of dependence upon something which gives very little, over which they have no control.

R. Berdie: What you are saying, I think, is that there are many students who are reacting in the way you described and that for them the present system is inadequate. But then I would say there are many students who are reacting in many other ways. Wouldn't you say that we have to pay much more attention to the individual patterns and reactions of the students and try to adapt our methods to them?

Walz: Yes, but I am not very optimistic about this happening in the kind of institutional structure we now have.

What is the effect on the individual of depersonalization in institutions?

Malmquist: While I think you have offered some very interesting observations, I am very concerned about the educational institutions assuming so much of the burden and being used so often as a scapegoat for our social ills. If educators are not armed with more than conscientious good will, I think the blame ten years from now could be nearly fatal to that profession.

Konopka: Your mention of the need for affection, though, struck me as being a very significant point. Maybe that really applies to all youth.

Foxley: Depersonalization is a deep problem at the University. Many students admit to a feeling of non-identity. They cope with this emptiness through drugs, which gives them the sense of omnipotence so apparently lacking.

Malmquist: From my viewpoint as a psychiatrist, I

would like to throw out some questions here that I have about how youth is coping. I wonder to what extent the disturbances of youth, and by that I do not mean mental illness but the perplexities they have, mirror those of our culture at large? To what extent are they really responding to the types of anxieties that go through our culture? To what degree do they use the same kinds of techniques in adapting? For example, it is estimated that about one-third of the adult population is being maintained on some kind of drug. If you throw in a couple of drinks a day, then over half of our population would be cooling it this way. I think we should keep this in mind when we discuss the youth drug culture, not as an excuse, but for our own enlightenment about the kind of models we provide.

Stein: As a doctor, I see other very real psychosomatic symptoms of this reaction to depersonalization. We even have a pamphlet on it and it has been labeled, "functional fatigue syndrome". It is characterized by exhaustion, apathy and depression. We see it especially among incoming foreign students. If this is, as it seems, a response to massive institutionalization and depersonalization, it would seem illogical to respond to these symptoms with even more regimentation, even stronger controls.

What is the impact of social change on youth?

Konopka: I think it is important here to say something about a very significant, totally new development in our time. It is a development, which is at once creating some turmoil within our institutions, and may help, eventually, to remedy some of these very serious responses to bureaucracy, the powerlessness of the individual and depersonalization. I believe we are in a period in which democracy is no longer merely a philosophy one talks about but is becoming a way of operating within the family, the school, the church. The authoritarian structure we brought with us to this country was a carry-over from the political monarchies of Europe. This is no longer workable, and we are seeing why. There is a real cry for participation by the individual, for equality between old and young, male and female. This goes back to our earlier discussion of how youth desperately wants to be a part of our society. It is slow, but there are some breakthroughs.

Another very important change, which is causing some alarm among those who do not understand it, is that education is, in our society, no longer a privilege

but a right. And as a right, the young feel they can expect something from it.

Clark: It is interesting that the sociologist, Willard Waller, wrote a book in 1932 which makes reference to the large numbers of students, who were as fiercely opposed to the processing of them in schools as they are now. But at that point, they could not act out as much of their frustration as they can now. There was a much greater distance between student and teacher, and the teacher knew how to use his distance toward maintaining an authoritative atmosphere in the classroom and controlling the student group. The greatest value in Waller's book, I think, is in showing the social lag in the schools. If you know something about secondary schools and can remember something about your own school experience, you know how little change there has been.

Konopka: Remember that 1932, the date of Waller's book, was the year the United States elected Mr. Roosevelt. I think the development and behavior of young people cannot be taken out of context of the total social and political situation.

Malmquist: This is a time of dramatic change, nonetheless. At times, the change is almost of chaotic proportion. During the week of protest on campus over Cambodia, I saw a nearly epidemic proportion of students who said they could not concentrate at all. This was very real to them, and I mention it because I think it is a commentary on the impact of social disruption on the individual's psychological functioning—I mean, in this case, the individual who is able to function more intactly under normal conditions.

I am most concerned about the impact on the maturing adolescent of an environment which is often chaotic and unpredictable. I think it is optimistic to claim that the external world compels an adaptation to it and man's survival tendencies can be taken for granted. It is more valid to assume that development is not chaotic, that it responds somehow to the environment in which it is nurtured. Take away a predictable kind of environment, and you produce an internalized chaos in the individual which bears fruit when he achieves adolescence or youth. In my work, I am constantly exposed to the adverse consequences of social disruption. But as a clinician, I cannot deal with

the environment. Perhaps you, in your fields, feel you have more to offer than I.

Konopka: I am sure we share many of your frustrations. Indeed, we are faced with some terribly difficult dilemmas. But I think there is hope in the very fact of our coming together to share the insights and knowledge which are part of our professional experience. An integrated view of reality is more valid than a singular viewpoint of any one field, but is especially important in an area which is both as fragmented and as commonly editorialized these days as "youth". James Baldwin said it beautifully when he spoke of our inter-relatedness:

> "The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out."

While we cannot pretend the omniscience which would allow us to offer solutions to some of the far-reaching problems, there are several ideas in this discussion which may be of some help in our work:

1. While an understanding of the general touchstone characteristics of youth is fundamental, the cry for personal, individual recognition cannot be overlooked. If one only takes into account the often homogeneous appearance of youth these days — the dress, hair, some of the vocalized attitudes — it would seem easy enough to generalize. But the uniqueness of the individual cannot be lost. Like each of us, the young person craves the knowledge that in some ways he is unique, exceptional.
2. Youth's genuine need for affection in personal encounter is real and is, again, something we can try to offer. As Dr. Malmquist has said, young people often tell us painful things about what they see as our hypocrisy and unrealized idealism. But to always counter their criticism with moralistic, judgemental responses only adds to the alienation. Self-respect and a sense of personal worth are essential ingredients to healthy growing up.
3. We have expressed concern about how school and academic training prolong dependence and separate youth from other age groups. Perhaps we should begin working out alternatives for those who want a different kind of experience. The kind of schools we are locked into may not be the best

for everyone. Together with youth, we need to search for creative answers.

4. A great deal of attention needs to be given to democratizing our institutions and lessening the fear of relinquishing the authoritarian structure. Youth demands that we live up to our Constitution. Participation is the key. Young people and adults can work this out if the individual, younger or older, can feel confident enough to give and take without feeling fearful or threatened.

5. Providing adult models for the young is a curcial problem. Life is changing too rapidly for us to try to perpetuate our work roles or even our community roles. But to say we adults have nothing enduring to offer is wrong and too disparaging. While we may not be able to dictate *what* young people should value and to what they should be committed, we can, by example, show them the value of being committed and of reliable and honest relationships between people.

6. Rather than require youth to find an identity which is set for a lifetime, the goal should be flexibility. As we have said, the identity crisis only starts in adolescence. It is a continuing process through adulthood, one that requires not the attainment of a singular viewpoint but continual questioning and evaluation. This is a way of growing which adults and youth share.

When young and old cast off the idea that they cannot communicate and see that together they have to build a better and more appropriate society, they will realize that there is not such a gap between them.

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